

Needham Human Rights Committee Minutes – January 17, 2013

Attendance: Marlene Schultz (co-chair), Cynthia Ganung, Charles Sahagian, Abdul Asmal, Mike Vaughn, Olly Harari, John Schlittler

1. Minutes

The minutes of Dec. 20, 2012 Meeting were approved with changes.

Under New Business: "A video documentary about prison inmates was *discussed* as the choice for a spring, 2013 event."

2. Old Business

Committee Membership

- Ashok Mehta who has been a guest at two meetings of the HRC is interested in becoming a member.
- Cynthia contacted a Needham High School student who showed interest in the HRC committee at the Diversity Summit last fall. He is interested in attending a HRC meeting and plans to attend in Feb.
- Marlene will ask Sandy about the process for high school students who might be interested.

3. Reports

Public Forum: "Immigration: How Do We Fix a Broken System?" Thurs., Feb. 28, 7:30-9pm, Needham Public Library,

Speaker: Dr. Alexandra Piñeros-Shields, Brandeis University, sponsored by the Needham Area Immigration Task Force and League of Women Voters. The HRC is a "supporting organization". Olly and Cynthia attend the Immigration Task Force meetings.

Next HRC Meeting: Since most of the HRC members plan to attend this forum on Feb.28, it was decided not to have the regular HRC meeting on Feb. 28, but to have a brief meeting of the HRC, if needed, at 7pm, before the beginning of the forum, at a location in the library. Any essential business could be conducted at that time.

MLK Jr. Day, Jan, 21,

Needham High School, 10:00am program; 9:15am refreshments.

The HRC is a sponsor of this program along with the Needham Clergy Association and Needham Public Schools and its METCO program. Sandra and Cynthia are members of the MLK Day program planning committee. This year's program focused on "Bringing the Dream to Children". There were several children's choirs, a youth band and dance group and a student speaker. Jim Boyd was the emcee and Rev. Deborah Jackson the keynote speaker. There was excellent publicity, including a front page article in the Needham Times. The HRC provided refreshments. Members of the HRC committee contacted businesses for donations and volunteered to pick up the donated food and beverages, set up and clean up. Abdul brought the HRC display and set it up in the NHS foyer. A temporary food event permit was obtained from the Board of Health. The committee expressed appreciation to Cynthia for coordinating the refreshments. The MLK Day planning committee is planning follow-up activities.

4. New business

Spring program (see Dec. 20, 2012 minutes)

The proposed HRC program on solitary confinement was discussed and approved, pending seeing the entire film. The film "The Worst of the Worst" is a 30 minute video which Aseem Mehta, a Needham High School graduate, was involved in producing. HRC members were sent a link to this project and a short trailer for the film. The HRC program would show the film, followed by a panel discussion. Although this is a topic not often discussed, it was thought that the participation of a Needham High School graduate would make it of interest to the community.

Possible times: March or April. Sunday, 2-3:30pm was thought to be preferable to an evening. The date will depend on Aseem's schedule and times that are open at the Needham Public Library.

Marlene will follow up with choosing the date/time. We may ask the library to be a co-sponsor.

Members expressed interest in having a program on the theme of "What are Human Rights?" which was discussed at the Dec. 2012 meeting. This might be a fall program.

Abdul suggested that the HRC should look at human rights violations. We might highlight some extraordinary work done in this area, such as the work of Needham resident Susan Rettig who created a foundation which provides education for school girls in Afghanistan. Chuck suggested that the HRC think about giving an award for work in this area, maybe at the MLK Day program.

Next HRC Meeting: Feb. 28, 7-7:30pm, to be decided by the co-chairs.

Recorder: Cynthia Ganung